

## **'FEELINGS MATTER MOST' CONFERENCE**

Achieving person-centred and relationship focused dementia care isn't simple. If it was, all of our providers would be doing it and we would be confident that everyone with a dementia living in a care or nursing home would live fulfilled lives and have positive experiences every single day.



David Sheard

Recently David Sheard, who appeared in the BBC programme 'Can Gerry Robinson Fix Dementia Care Homes' came to Cumbria as a guest of Care Sector Alliance Cumbria\* and spoke passionately about his approach to dementia care.

Can we move to feeling the lived emotional experience of a person living with dementia? In order to deliver the best possible care David believes, and has demonstrated over the years, that we have to live in their reality and support them to be who they are. During the day David had us tapping into our own experiences and emotions. We felt sheer panic at being asked to carry out a task we felt we couldn't cope with, anxiety at the results, embarrassment at getting things wrong, frustration with the barriers to change, sadness for the desperate circumstances of some in dementia care, joy when shown examples of Homes 'getting it' and working with their Residents who were thriving and having a real life.

The day flew by as the Conference with approximately 140 social care provider delegates, were engrossed as David described ways to engage with people with dementia so that they live more content lives. David believes that the quest for quality in a service begins with a staff team really seeing, hearing and feeling minute by minute the quality of interactions in people's lives.

Once a connection is made with an individual's feelings and spirit, the place where they live is more likely to feel like a real home, sound like they are among friends and look like fun.

Feedback from attendees indicated that they found the day truly inspirational. The day was a roller-coaster for us all - emotional, challenging, reflective, thought-provoking, creating enthusiasm for change, and a real wake up call – as David says 'Do You Gerrit?' Hmm – Feelings Matter Most – I think by the end of the day we were all 'gerring it' and are at the start of a most interesting journey.

Lesley Gill, Care Sector Alliance Cumbria.

Care Sector Alliance Cumbria is an employer led partnership supported by Adult Social Care. Its Lead Officer, Lesley Gill is part of the Care Governance Team.